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Magic

Cathryn Fox

Mayhem

Sylvia Day

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To the wonderful and talented Sylvia Day,

who made writing this story so much fun.

Chapter 1

OCTOBER31

“COME ON, BRIANNA, YOU KNOW YOU WANT TO.”

Brianna James angled her head and shot her best friend Kayla Pierce a sidelong glance.

Not only was Kayla her closest friend, she was also her most valued employee. With her marketing background and merchandising skills, Kayla had helped increase sales and profits at Conjure, Brianna‟s very own magic boutique centrally located in the quaint little town of Wilkins, Massachusetts.

Keeping a telltale grin from her face, Brianna folded her arms in defiance, and replied with casual nonchalance, “Who says I want to?”

Kayla refilled the crystal decanter with jasmine incense and then leaned into Brianna. She arched one brow, pursed her full lips, and whispered in a low, sultry tone, “You do, with your eyes and your body.”

Well, she certainly had her with that, Brianna mused, noting with dismay how easily her friend could read her. Once again Brianna stole a glance at the guy meandering through her magic boutique. Okay, so there was no denying she wanted to gobble him up like a ABC Amber LIT Converter

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scrumptious Halloween treat. But good God, did Kayla so blatantly have to point it out?

Brianna‟s lascivious gaze swept the length of his long, muscular torso. Her body reacted to the gorgeous specimen before her, tingling and warming in her most private places. Even the short blond hairs at the nape of her neck bristled in erotic delight. Squirming on her stool, Brianna ran her damp palms over her jeans and resisted the urge to lick her freshly painted lips. Obviously, it had been far too long since she‟d sampled anything so fine.

Every few minutes Mr. Sexy Adonis would cast her a suggestive look. One that said he was less interested in the Halloween costumes, magical charms, and novelties in the showroom and more interested in the merchandise behind the glass counter. Despite the sexual sparks between them, Brianna smoothed the hem on her navy knit sweater and averted her gaze, taking care not to send out the wrong signals.

Kayla‟s sharp intake of air gained her attention. Brianna twisted sideways to watch her friend‟s hazel eyes light with excitement. “Why don‟t you invite him to Abby‟s Halloween bash tonight?”

Brianna grabbed the book of spells from under the desk, dropped it onto the counter with a clunk, and absentmindedly fingered the aged, yellow pages. She rolled one shoulder casually. “Because I‟m not going, I have work to do. Inventory is next week, and I want to get a head start.”

“Come on Brianna, it‟s Halloween,and…” she said, stretching that one word out, “it‟s your birthday. Double the reason to celebrate.” Kayla got quiet for a moment, crinkled her cute little nose, and added, “Is it because you don‟t have a date?” She didn‟t wait for an answer.

Instead she waved her hand toward the showroom, and said, “If it is, then ask him—” She stopped midsentence when she spotted Mr. Sexy Adonis exiting the store.

Brianna gave a resigned sigh. Even though Kayla was her closest friend, Kayla had no ideawhat orwho Brianna really was. Which was the main reason why Brianna had given up dating in the first place. After the last fiasco, when her date had nearly discovered she had special powers, Brianna wasn‟t about to risk having her true identity revealed. Fortunately for her, the night she had misused her magic, her date had been drinking heavily, thus enabling her to pass her slip-up on his inebriation.

She hadn‟t meant to cast a spell on that bimbo and give her lopsided boobs. Really, she hadn‟t. It was just that sometimes her temper got the better of her. And honestly, that slut shouldn‟t have been all over Brianna‟s date in the first place. Council had nearly had her ass for that one. And messing with Council‟s stringent rules was something she‟d rather avoid.

She shivered and linked her fingers together as her thoughts wandered to the legend of Xander. Apparently, decades ago, Xander, the bad boy of all bad boys, had used his magic for his own personal gain, not the betterment of mankind. His misuse had landed him in a heap of trouble. To teach him a lesson, Council had cast its own spell on him and ABC Amber LIT Converter

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transformed him into a pussycat…meow. Brianna cringed. She had no desire to roam the earth for centuries as any type of animal, never to be heard from again.

Speaking of animals, her pet cat Max jumped on the counter and rubbed up against her.

“Hey, Max,” she cooed, stroking his silky black fur. She‟d found the little guy just over a year ago, hanging around outside her shop. She‟d taken him in, and they‟d been best buds ever since. Unlike all the other males in her life, Max was always there for her, on the coldest of days and the loneliest of nights. He was there to comfort her and keep her warm.

Truth be told, she‟d shared all her secrets and heart‟s desires with him, things she never felt comfortable telling anyone else. Although Kayla was her closest friend, the fact that Brianna was a witch forced her to keep a modicum of distance. So when it really came down to it, she‟d have to call Max her very best friend.

Max stretched out his paws and swatted at an imaginary object. A moment later, he circled around the book of spells. Brianna narrowed her eyes in concern, assessing him, noting that he‟d been acting odd all day. Perhaps it had something to do with the full moon. On Halloween. On her birthday.

The three elements needed to conjure a new spell. Or so the legend says.

A shiver came out of nowhere and raced down her spine.

Pushing those thoughts to the far corners of her mind, she glanced out the store‟s front window and watched Mr. Sexy Adonis weave his way through traffic and cross to the other side of the street. Of course, even if he had stuck around, she had no intention of asking him out.

A few months back it had occurred to her that she had very little control over her emotions or her wild temper. She figured the best way to keep her identity intact and avoid future disasters was to steer clear of men, especially those who got her panties in a twist. And that guy definitely got her panties in a twist. Anyway, since she‟d begun stocking those cute little toys called The Magic Bullet, she saw no real need for the opposite sex anymore.

Okay, so the bullets weren‟t really magical per se, but boy oh boy, they sure did magical things to her body. One part in particular.

Kayla‟s voice pulled her from her musings. “Hey, maybe there is a magical spell in that book of yours that can help you find a date. A man who will fulfill your deepest, darkest desires,” Kayla added, fingering the aged parchment paper with longing.

Brianna chuckled and kept her tone light. “I wish.” Fortunately, Kayla was oblivious to the fact that the weathered book before them was indeed the real thing. Otherwise, Brianna had no idea what kind of trouble her friend would get herself into. As it stood now, Kayla barely spared the book a glance, assuming it was merely a prop to authenticate the magic boutique.

Kayla drew a deep breath and let it out slowly. Her eyes glossed with desire. “Can you ABC Amber LIT Converter

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imagine if there was such a spell? I could finally fulfill my deepest, darkest desire to be a Kayla sandwich. Oh yeah, I can see it now, me sandwiched between two muscled, well-endowed hunks.” She shivered, almost violently. “Simply delicious.”

Brianna grinned at her friend‟s antics and let her own mind stray. For a brief moment she wondered what it would be like to conjure a spell that would fulfill her deepest, darkest desires and bring forth the man destined to be her perfect lover. A man who knew what she wanted long before she did and knew how to give it to her. Over and over again. Heat rushed through her and moistened her panties. Before Brianna realized what she was doing, she found herself flipping through the pages like a junkie in need of a fix.

The bell over the door chimed and helped pull her from her musings.

Dear God, what the hell am I doing?Berating herself, she marshaled her thoughts and summoned what little control she had left.

“Abby,” Kayla shouted, and stepped out from behind the counter to greet her friend. “We were just talking about you.”

Abby finger combed her windblown ponytail and loosened the multicolored scarf around her neck. “You were?” she asked. Abby turned sideways and smiled at Brianna, her pretty blue eyes lighting up. “What‟s up?”

Kayla piped in. “I was just telling Brianna that she should come to your party.”

Abby‟s smile widened. “She absolutely should.” Abby reached into her bag and pulled out a flyer. She crossed the floor and handed it to Brianna. “Come, it will be fun.”

After they exchanged a few more pleasantries, Abby turned back to Kayla. “Now show me these costumes you were talking about.”

Brianna turned her attention to the inventory sheets before her, taking stock. For some unexplainable reason she found it hard to concentrate, something kept nagging at her, yet she couldn‟t quite put her finger on it. Max paced around the counter, restless. Then he did the strangest thing. Using his paw, he flipped open the book of spells, walked over the page, and purred louder.

Brianna gathered him into her arms and stroked his back. She glanced at the love spell that he‟d flipped to. “Well, well, Max, if I didn‟t know better, I‟d think you and Kayla were in cahoots.” Of course the spell he‟d flipped to wasn‟t exactly what she needed. In fact, there was no such spell to match her wild imagination.

That doesn‟t mean I couldn‟t conjure one, especially now, with all the elements in place.

Brianna drew her bottom lip between her teeth. Naturally it‟d be wrong, forbidden even, to write such a self-fulfilling spell. Even if it‟d make one hell of a birthday present to herself.

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Her glance went to the stack of Magic Bullets. She took an extra moment to consider things further. Okay, so maybe her little sex toy wasn‟t as great as the real thing. And maybe she did crave the sensual feel of flesh on flesh, skin on skin. And maybe she could write a spell that would bring forth the perfect lover and have him disappear by midnight.

Oh God, I can‟t really be considering something so scandalous, so forbidden. Can I?

It‟s far too risky.

Far too inappropriate.

Far too tempting.

I‟m going to do it.

Oh hell!

Before she could stop herself, she grabbed a pen and flipped open the book of spells, turning to a blank parchment page, where she jotted down an incantation.

Mystical, magical, mayhem, and more

Bring me a lover with the stamina of four.

A lover who‟ll awaken my darkest desires

and last through one night stoking the fires.

Mystical, magical, mayhem, and more

Let the lover of my dreams walk through the door.

Once complete, she stood back and studied the words, knowing her incantation wouldn‟t come true until she sprinkled it with cat‟s claw. She took a moment of reprieve and did a quick consultation with her conscience.

Ah hell.

Shaking her head, she drew a deep breath and straightened her spine, her damn conscience overruling her salacious libido. Deep in her gut she knew she couldn‟t go through with something so risky, no matter how deliciously tempting, no matter how fabulous a birthday present it would make.

Suddenly, out of nowhere Max pounced, knocking over a vial of cat‟s claw, spilling it on the parchment paper.

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Spilling it onto her incantation.

Oh boy!

Just then Kayla and Abby approached the counter. Flustered, Brianna ripped the page out and tucked it inside one of their store flyers, out of view. The bells over the door chimed and automatically drew her focus. Brianna glanced up in time to see a tall, dark-haired man exit the store. Strange. She hadn‟t noticed him come in earlier. Pushing that thought to the recesses of her mind, she turned her attention to the crisis at hand.

God Max, what have you done?

Her pulse leapt in her throat. Perhaps it was just a legend and it wouldn‟t come true, after all.

Then again, perhaps it would.

Her stomach knotted with equal measures of apprehension and excitement.

She scanned the store, searching for Max, but he was nowhere to be found. “Max? Where are you?” Brianna stepped out from behind the counter.

“I‟ll ring in Abby‟s purchase,” Kayla piped in, moving in to take Brianna‟s place behind the register.

Brianna stepped out from behind the counter and perused the shop, hunting for her cat, hoping he hadn‟t slipped out the door behind that tall, dark-haired man. Lately, Max seemed so restless, wandering off at will.

As she searched, that same tall, dark man lingered on the curb outside, drawing her attention. Oddly enough, as she angled her head for a better look, sparks shot through her body, and the fine hairs on the back of her neck began tingling in anticipation. Anticipation of what, she couldn‟t be sure. Her palms grew moist, her pulse kicked up a notch.

The man twisted around to face her and shot her a panty-soaking smile. Her hormones rocketed to life like they never had before. His sensuous lips turned up over perfect white teeth, his strong athletic body beckoned hers. When his mesmerizing green eyes locked on hers, her breath caught on a gasp. Lust slammed into her, forcing her to bite down on her bottom lips to avoid a breathy moan. The heat and longing in his eyes licked over her flesh.

Her skin grew tight with dark desire, and she began to ache, deep between her legs. Brianna squeezed her thighs together, hyperaware of the dampness pooling in her panties.

Oh God! Those eyes.

They were so familiar.

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So. Hauntingly. Familiar.

Max?

Chapter 2

XANDER TORE HIS GAZE FROM THE SEXY WOMAN INSIDE THEmagic boutique,

a woman who"d been getting under his skin for the last year without even trying. She"d made him wild with the need to touch her, to taste her, and to feel her heat between his legs.

He longed to anchor her body to his and gaze into her dark brown eyes. He longed to run his fingers through her honey blond hair and cover her mouth with his. But mostly he longed to bury himself in her silken sheath and make sweet passionate love to her all night long.

Soon, he promised himself. Soon.

He took a moment to stretch out his arms and legs, enjoying the way his long-sleeved T-shirt and jeans felt against his skin. After glancing up and down the street, orienting himself in his environment, he moved swiftly down the sidewalk. He loved the way the midday autumn sun warmed his face, loved the way the breeze bristled his hair, but what he loved the most was walking on two feet instead of four paws.

In an automatic gesture, he brought his hand to his mouth and licked, grooming himself.

As his tongue connected with skin, not fur, a soft chuckle rose from the depths of his throat.

That was definitely going to take some getting used to, especially after living in feline form for the last few decades.

Feline form.

He scoffed. Thanks to the spell Council had cast on him many moons ago.

Okay, so maybe he"d gotten a little out of control in the past, using his powers for personal gain and not for the betterment of mankind, and maybe he needed to be taught a lesson, but Jesus, roaming the earth as a realtomcat certainly seemed a bit excessive to him.

Now, thanks to Brianna, he was human again, and he had absolutely no intention of ever going back to walking on all furry fours.

Brianna.Sweet, temperamental Brianna.

Little did she know that her incantation to bring forth her perfect lover, one who knew her better than she knew herself, one who could fulfill her deepest darkest desires, would temporarily break the spell on him. Because he, and only he, fit that bill to a T.

Over the past year, not knowing who he really was, Brianna had whispered all her sinful ABC Amber LIT Converter

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little secrets to him. She"d murmured all the naughty, delicious things she"d like done to her, over and over again, and tonight he had every intention of fulfilling her fantasies until they were both sated and drained.

Should Brianna fall in love with him in the process, and kiss him, like she really meant it, before the stroke of midnight, before her dream lover was destined to disappear, then and only then would the feline spell be broken forever.

As Xander negotiated his way through the crowd, a bevy of flyers stapled to a post caught his eye. He stepped up to them. “Ah, yes the Halloween bash.” He grinned. The perfect setting to seduce his sweet Brianna and make all her dreams come true. The perfect setting to get her to kiss him.

Deeply.

Thoroughly.

He"d naturally have to keep his identity a secret until she"d fallen in love with him. He couldn"t risk Brianna"s discovering he was Xander, for fear that she"d heard the horrid legend. Horrid, but true. No doubt she"d keep her distance and assume he was sweet-talking her between the sheets in a bid to get her to fall for him, to kiss him, so he could go back to his rebel ways. She"d be mistaken, of course. After living with her for the last year, he now knew no other woman would ever compare.

Brianna James had changed his ways.

His grin turned wicked. She had no idea that when she conjured that forbidden spell, it would change the fate of her future. And his.

Forever.

Brianna pushed open the heavy glass door and stepped out onto the curb in time to see the mysterious man round the corner and disappear from her line of sight. She felt such an odd, unexplainable pull toward him but resisted the urge to follow.

The wind picked up and blew her short blond hair in front of her eyes. Brianna tucked it behind her ears and twisted around to make her way back inside.

She took a moment to sort through everything that had just transpired. The incantation. Her missing cat. The mysterious man with gorgeous green eyes that resembled Max‟s to perfection.

O-kay.

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She couldn‟t deny that over the past few centuries she‟d seen stranger things. But it was a lover‟s spell that she had cast, if she had indeed cast it, not one that changed a cat into a man. She had to be mistaken, she just had to be. Because the alternative was far too preposterous. Wasn‟t it?

Brianna stepped back into the store and noted the time. She spotted Kayla emptying the cash drawer and realized it was past closing time. She‟d been so mesmerized by her mystery man that she hadn‟t even noticed Abby leave.

Kayla locked the safe and handed her the key. “Looks like you had a successful day. I do love Halloween for sales,” Kayla said, bright-eyed.

Brianna smiled and tucked the key into her jeans. Striving for normalcy, she asked, “Have you seen Max?”

“Nope.” Kayla nodded toward the stairs that led to Brianna‟s upstairs apartment. “He‟s probably already up there fast asleep. I swear that cat sleeps twenty-one hours a day. The other three he‟s out prowling. What a life.”

Brianna bit on her bottom lip and nodded. “Yeah, you‟re probably right,” she agreed wholeheartedly. Kayla had Max‟s routine down to a T.

“He‟ll show up eventually. He always does,” Kayla added, and grabbed her wind jacket.

She made her way to the door. “Everything is secure, all you have to do is lock up. So I‟ll see you tonight right?”

“I don‟t know—”

“Come on, Brianna. There just might be a special Halloween treat waiting for you at the party. A treat so sweet it will give you cavities,” she added with a wink.

Brianna chuckled. “Do you ever think of anything else besides getting laid.”

Kayla puckered her lips in thought. “Does oral sex count?”

Brianna rolled her eyes. “Good night, Kayla.”

“I‟ll see you at the party.” With a wave, Kayla disappeared, leaving Brianna alone to once again mull over the events. After locking the front door, Brianna made her way to the stairwell.

“Max,” she called as she ascended. “Where the hell are you?”

Worry gnawed at her insides after a thorough search of her apartment turned up nothing.

Could he have gotten out again? She hated the thoughts of Max out prowling on Halloween.

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Suddenly she remembered that she‟d left the spell tucked inside a pile of flyers. Brianna rushed down the stairs in record time and grabbed the stack, rooting through them.

Oh. Shit.

Her stomach lurched. The parchment paper was gone.

Her mind raced. Abby! Kayla must have given her a flyer. Dear God, what if the spell actually worked. She couldn‟t let that fall into the wrong hands. Although the incantation was specifically written with her desires in mind, such spells could mutate and evolve to satisfy the deepest, darkest desires of those who read it.

Without haste, Brianna grabbed a sexy, black satin sorceress costume off the rack, pulled it on, and headed out the door, to the Halloween party.

She had to find that incantation and destroy it before her magic caused a whole lot of mayhem.

Chapter 3

XANDER SMOOTHED DOWN THE COLLAR ON HIS PIRATE COSTUMEand

mingled with the other guests at Abby"s Halloween bash. Bottle of beer in hand, he roamed the room, weaving his way in and out of partygoers, waiting for Brianna.

His sweet Brianna.

A sexy, temperamental woman who longed to indulge in a few sex games with her very own pirate, not to mention a few other bad boy characters that she"d love to have a little playtime with.

While waiting for Brianna to arrive, Xander took a long pull from his drink and perused the room. He spotted Abby making her way through the crowd. A man in the corner dressed in a black-and-silver genie costume couldn"t seem to take his eyes off her. Not that he could blame him, really. Dressed in a very sexy, very revealing purple gypsy costume, she looked stunning. But the truth was Xander only had eyes for Brianna. So he continued his wait.

Fortunately, his wait was short-lived.

He knew the minute Brianna walked through the door. His entire body felt her long before he saw her. Xander twisted around, willing her to look in his direction, for when she did, the night no longer belonged to her. It belonged to him.

Brianna frantically searched the room, as though looking for someone, or something.

When she caught his gaze he could hear her breath catch on a gasp and see her eyes open ABC Amber LIT Converter

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wide with instant recognition.

“Brianna.” He mouthed the words and crooked his finger. “Come to me.”

She complied. Time seemed suspended as she sailed across the wide expanse of floor, closing the gap between them. Xander swept his gaze down the length of her sexy sorceress costume, then inhaled, pulling her warm natural scent into his lungs. Her feminine aroma nearly drove him to his knees. When she stepped into his personal space, the air around them charged with sexual electricity. Everything in him reached out to her.

Fueled by his need to taste her, to touch her, he ran the pad of his thumb over her plump lips, then circled his arm around her tiny waist, anchoring her to him. At that precise moment he decided that he"d like nothing more than to spend the rest of his life pleasuring her the way she deserved to be pleasured.

Dark lashes fluttered over come-hither brown eyes. Color bloomed high on her cheeks. Her sensuous voice was low, hesitant, but underneath the waver he heard the desire, the need.

“Who are you?”

He brought his lips to within a hairbreadth of hers and breathed a kiss over her mouth. Her nipples pressed into his chest and tightened. His desire mounted when he felt the way her body reacted to his close proximity. “My sweet Brianna. All you need to know is that tonight I am the man, or rather the pirate,” he said with a grin, “who is going to make all your fantasies come true.” He fingered the soft material of her costume, his mind visualizing the path his tongue would take while ridding her of her clothes.

Her mouth fell open, her eyes widened. Clearly, understanding had dawned.

“The spell,” she whispered.

“Yes, the spell.”

“She opened her mouth to speak but he cut her off.

No more questions. Just know that tonight you are mine.” He slid his hand down to the small of her back, then traced the curve of her lush ass. “Say you"ll be mine, Brianna.”

She nibbled her lip, as though undecided. But her hesitation lasted only seconds. Xander knew she wanted this as much as he did, so much so that she"d gone against her own best interests and written a forbidden love spell.

She sucked in a breath, then whispered, “Unbelievable.”

He chuckled and pulled her impossibly closer, until she could feel his arousal pressing insistently against her hip, clamoring for attention.

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She gulped air and glanced around as though realizing where they were.

Wanting to ensure their privacy while he did delectable things to her body, he lowered his lips to her ear, and whispered, “Say it, Brianna. Say you‟ll be mine.” Jesus, her nearness made his whole body quake in heated anticipation.

Her breath came in a low rush. “I‟ll be yours,” she murmured.

A flurry of emotions passed through him and filled him with longing. “Good, then come with me.”

Her hand slipped inside his. “Where to?” Desire clouded the depths of her chocolate eyes.

“To your place, where I‟ll have all night to make your dreams come true.”

All night to make your dreams come true.

Those eight simple words rang in her head. Well not all night, Brianna thought sadly. Just until midnight. She stole a glance at her watch. Four hours away. Oh my, what she could do with her very own pirate in four hours.

Anchored to his side, he effortlessly moved them through the crowd, ushering her outdoors. She went willingly, forgetting about everything and anything except this man and this moment.

A cool evening breeze whipped around them, but the feel of her pirate‟s strong hands moving over her body drove back the cold. Tuning out the trick-or-treaters bustling around them, they walked quickly down the sidewalk and hopped into her vehicle, both eager to reach their destination. A moment later she found herself unlocking her apartment door, inviting a mysterious stranger in for one night of passion.

As she took in the handsome man before her, her stomach clenched. A barrage of emotions closed over her like a bed of fog and shook her to her core.

At the stroke of midnight, he‟ll be gone.

A pang of regret hit her hard and nearly wobbled her knees. That reaction shocked her. She barely knew him, yet she felt so close to him, as though they belonged together.

He locked the door behind them, gathered her in his arms, and carried her to the bedroom.

How did he know where it was? She was about to ask, but his words cut her off.

Her body slid down his as he set her on the floor. His green eyes darkened. His jaw clenched. His voice dropped an octave. “You have something of mine.”

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Her heart leapt. “I do?”

“Yes, you do.” He drew his sword from its sheath and circled her, keeping his body close.

“And I believe you know better than to keep a treasure from a pirate.”

Oh. My. God. He was playing out her fantasy. Almost word for word.

She lifted her chin in defiance. “I know of no such treasure that you speak of.”

His grin turned wicked and did mysterious things to her nerve endings. “Is that so?”

“Yes, that is so.”

He got quiet as though mulling things over. “I‟m afraid you leave me with only two choices, my sweet.”

She met his glance unflinchingly even though it took effort, especially with the heat pooling between her thighs, moistening her panties. She arched one brow. “And my choices are?”

“You either hand over the treasure, or I‟ll be forced to search for it myself.”

Her breasts tightened and tingled to the point of pain. She pursed her lips and held her ground. “I told you, I do not have your treasure.”

He slipped his hand around her back and cut the knot with his sword, releasing the straps on her sorceress costume.

In an automatic reaction she reached for the dress, pinning it to her chest.

“Don‟t.” The authority in his tone excited her beyond anything she‟d ever known, but the traces of tenderness did weird things to her insides. “Remove your hand.”

Pleasure raced through her when she saw the hunger in his gaze. Her skin came alive, and the tang of her arousal saturated the room. He inhaled, slowly, as though savoring the smell of her excitement.

Holding his steely gaze, she let go of the fabric. It fell to her waist and bunched around her hips.

Green eyes full of lust traveled to her swollen nipples. He licked his lips, and she nearly cried out in euphoria.

She arched her back and lowered her tone. “Is this the treasure you seek, pirate?” God, she hardly recognized her voice.

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The heated look in his eyes excited and frightened her at once. “Perhaps,” he murmured, dipping his head. He cupped her breasts in his palms and lifted them higher, giving his mouth easier access. He pulled one breast into his mouth. Oh God, his lips felt like fire on her skin. His tongue made a slow pass over her nipples. Then he drew them in for a more thorough taste, sucking and kissing until she thought she‟d died and gone to heaven.

Beneath his expert ministrations her sex quaked, and her nipples throbbed in heavenly bliss.

She angled her chin and worked to find her voice. “Well, pirate, have you found your treasure.”

After his mouth had had its fill, he inched back and met her glance. His eyes flared with heat. “It is close but not the treasure you are still keeping from me.”

She starched her spine. “As I said, I know of no such treasure.”

He glanced the length of her, letting his gaze linger between the apex of her thighs.

“Perhaps you are hiding it elsewhere.” His dark tone excited her.

Brianna sucked in air. “Perhaps you are mistaken.”

“Then let‟s find out.” There was a challenge in his voice. He pressed his sword between her breasts and trailed it over her skin until it touched the silky costume at her hips.

“Remove your clothes.”

She angled her chin and thinned her lips. “I most certainly will not.”

“Then you leave me no choice.” With a quick swipe he sliced her dress down the center, all the way from her hips to her ankles. It fell from her body and landed in a puddle at her feet.

Standing before him in nothing but her silky bikini panties, panties that were drenched in arousal, she gasped and shivered with pleasure.

He slipped the sword under the thin elastic holding the slip of material together and tugged. Her panties joined her costume on the floor.

“Ah, I believe I have found the treasure I seek.” He licked his lips, his breathing labored.

“Spread your legs,” he commanded.

She caught his torrid gaze, heard the raw hunger in his voice, and noted the way his body fairly shook.

His deep, authoritative voice prompted her into action. Her pirate sank to his knees and insinuated himself between her legs. He inhaled.

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She heard him swallow. Hard. “You must be punished for withholding such a fine treasure.”

The scent of her arousal swirled around them. Knees wobbling, Brianna gripped his shoulders to support herself. Her words came out broken. “Yes, pirate. I never should have withheld such a treasure. I now know it was wrong of me, and I must be punished.”

He parted her folds with his tongue and groaned deep in his throat. “I believe a tongue-lashing is in order.” He spoke in whispered words.

“Oh good God,” she murmured, when he licked her all the way from the back to the front.

She‟d never felt anything so fine.

He climbed out from between her legs and backed her up until her knees hit the bed. “Lie down and spread your legs for me.”

She did as he requested. He leaned over her and gathered her into his arms, creating an instant intimacy. His bewitching green eyes held her captive, and in that moment something powerful transpired between them.

Warm lips connected with hers and kissed a path down her body. When his tongue pressed into her pussy, her thoughts fragmented. “Oh my,” she whispered and writhed restlessly on the bed. He spent a long time tasting her, circling her clit with his tongue, driving her into a frenzy of need.

“Please,” she begged, desperate for release. She began panting, her fingers raking through his jet-black hair, urging him to take her to oblivion and beyond.

He slipped one thick finger inside her and caressed her sensitive spot. As his tongue continued its gentle assault on her clit, her sex muscles began to clench. A second finger joined the first. He stroked her, deeply, moving his fingers in and out until her body went up in flames. Her pussy quaked as she released her liquid heat into her pirate‟s mouth.

“That‟s a girl.” He moaned and lapped at her, drinking every last drop of her creamy essence. He held her for a long time until her breathing returned to normal.

A moment later he climbed to his feet and tore off his costume. He stood over her, giving her time to peruse his bronzed nakedness. Her breath hitched, her hormones went into overdrive. He was even more beautiful than she had imagined. He climbed over her. The weight of his muscular body felt so good on top of her.

He spoke in a hushed tone. “I want you Brianna, like I‟ve never wanted another.” His voice was so tender, so gentle. He feathered his fingers over her naked flesh. His caress seeped under her skin and touched her on a deeper level. Warm lips brushed over hers with the utmost care. Green eyes full of lust and…lovemet hers. “Tonight I want to love you, and make love to you until you give yourself over to me, heart and soul.”

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When his words sank in, Brianna drew in air. Oh God, he wasn‟t supposed to fall for her, and she definitely wasn‟t supposed to fall for him. This was just supposed to be about sex, about deepest, darkest fantasies. Despite that, everything in her reached out to him. There was something about him. Something warm, familiar, and easy. The way he talked to her, and his touch, the way it felt more emotional and less physical, had her feeling all peculiar inside. This pirate, the man from her spell, the one who was to disappear at midnight, drew her into a place where her heart ruled and nothing else mattered.

She wanted to keep him around longer. Tonight. Tomorrow. Forever.

Oh boy!

She glanced at the clock. Dear God, what had she gone and gotten herself into.

Chapter 4

XANDER GLANCED AT THE GORGEOUS WOMAN BENEATH

HIM.HIS COCK THROBBED TO THE POINT OF PAIN.HE

NEEDED TO ENTER HER, TO FEEL HER WARMTH, TO FEEL

HER TIGHTNESS, AND TO CLAIM HER AS HIS.ONCE AND FOR

ALL.

“Kiss me, Brianna.”

She poised her mouth open, welcoming him into her body and her heart. When his lips closed down on hers, she kissed him with everything in her.

In that moment, when their mouths connected, when her love reached out to him, he pushed his cock inside her slick softness.

Their tongues mated, her legs wrapped around his back and squeezed, drawing him in deeper. Fuck, he"d never felt anything so divine.

“Brianna my sweet. You are mine. Forever.”

She moaned and writhed beneath him, his girth pushing open the tight walls of her channel, stroking, caressing, bringing her to the point of no return.

He murmured into her mouth and brushed her damp bangs from her forehead. “Say it, Brianna.”

Her eyes glossed over and darkened with emotions. “I am yours, pirate.”

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He hated that he had to keep his true identity a secret. Soon, he vowed, soon she"d know the truth. And then they"d never keep anything from each other again.

He cradled her in his arms, their perspiration mingled. Together they established a rhythm, each taking and giving in equal measure.

“I"m there,” she murmured.

“I know, babe, I know.” He increased the tempo and slipped a finger between their bodies, caressing her clit, giving her what she needed to take her over the edge.

“Come for me, sweet Brianna.”

Her sex muscles clenched and tightened and massaged his cock, bringing on his own orgasm. Sweat collected on his brow as his climax took hold. He stilled as his seed splashed up inside her.

She wrapped her arms around his neck and pulled his mouth to hers. He lay on top of her, taking care not to crush her. Xander brushed her damp hair from her face and gazed into sated eyes. A smile lingered on her lips, and he loved that he"d put it there.

“That was unbelievable,” she whispered, her voice drowsy. She reached out and touched his cheek. He leaned into her hand, absorbing her warmth, her love.

“You are an amazing woman.” When she smiled at the endorsement, he rolled to the side and cradled her warm body against his. He held her for a long moment, stroking her skin softly until her breathing pattern changed. When he knew she was fast asleep, he pulled the blankets over her and climbed from the bed.

Sunlight streamed in through her lace curtain and pulled her from her slumber. With her lids shut tight, memories of last night came rushing back. Oh God. She didn"t want to open her eyes. That meant she"d have to face reality. And she wasn"t ready for that. Nor was she ready to reach across the mattress only to find out the warm body that had loved her so deeply, so thoroughly last night was now gone.

A noise in the corner of her bedroom had her lids fluttering open. Her glance darted around her room, then settled back onto the naked man sitting in her rocking chair. Her voice sounded as shaky as she felt. “What? How? What are you doing?”

He climbed from the chair and moved to the edge of the bed. “I"m watching you sleep, the same way I have for the last year.” Warm fingers touched her face. “I"m Xander, A.K.A.

Max.”

Sweet mother of God. Understanding dawned in small increments. Her voice rose an ABC Amber LIT Converter

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octave. “It is you!”

He nodded.

Shocked, her mouth opened and closed. She pressed her hand to her forehead. “Dear Lord, what have I done?”

He pressed his finger to her lips. “Shh…it‟s okay, Brianna.”

Her limbs felt shaky, her head heavy. She fought to think straight. “I still don‟t understand.

How did my incantation turn you back into a man?” She drew the sheets up to her neck, puzzled.

“You wanted a man who knew you better than you knew yourself. One who could fulfill your deepest, darkest desires. I‟m the only man who fits that description, my sweet.”

She paused, recalling how she‟d whispered all her secrets to her cat Max. To Xander, playboy of all playboys. “Oh hell.” Thoroughly embarrassed, color stained her face.

“Don‟t be embarrassed, Brianna.”

She swallowed. “Why are you still here? You were supposed to disappear at midnight.”

A warm, genuine smile touched his mouth. He squared his shoulders and puffed his chest out. “Because you love me, and because you kissed me, during a full moon, on Halloween.

The three elements I needed in place to break the spell Council had placed on me.”

Her mind whirred, recalling how the previous evening her cat had flipped open the book of spells, to a love incantation. “So you knew you had to get me to fall in love with you last night; otherwise it would take decades for all those elements to be in place again.” And what were the chances that another witch would summon a love spell such as she had, one that would bring forth Xander, the only man who knew her better than she knew herself and could satisfy her deepest, darkest desires? On Halloween. During a full moon.

Slim to none.

Her throat tightened, her stomach knotted to the point of pain.

“Yes,” he said with such honesty. “I needed you to fall in love with me.”

She scrambled backwards and tightened the sheets around her chest. How could she have been so stupid to allow herself to have sex…to fall in love…with a man whose reputation preceded him? A man who would undoubtedly return to his wild, wanton ways first chance.

As though he read her thoughts, he said, “I have no desire to return to that lifestyle. I love you, Brianna. And only you. And I want to spend the rest of my life taking care of you the ABC Amber LIT Converter

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way you‟ve taken care of me for the last year.”

Brianna swallowed, unsure.

“Don‟t you see, I could easily have fled last night after you fell asleep. But I wanted to be here when you woke up, to prove how much I love you, that there is nowhere else I‟d rather be and no one else I‟d rather be with.”

The emotions in his eyes spoke volumes. He touched her, and she could feel his love reaching out to her, seeping under her skin.

He sidled closer and planted a warm kiss on her mouth. Good Lord, no man could kiss like that without feeling a deeper emotional connection.

“You‟re serious,” she said, her eyes opening wide. “Ohmygod, you‟re serious.”

He chuckled. “I‟ve never been more serious in my life. Human or feline form,” he added with a grin. “You‟ve opened my eyes to what‟s important in this world, sweetheart.”

Her heart leapt with joy, and suddenly it occurred to her that with Xander, she could have the relationship she"d always wanted but never thought she could have. One where she could be herself, even if her temper got the better of her. Xander knewwhat she was. No longer would she have to worry about hiding her identity for fear a man, a man who got her panties in a twist, that is, would discover her magic.

He gathered her into his arms. Gaze riveted, he said, "You"ve spent the last year taking care of me, catering to my every whim, my every need. Now it"s my turn to take care of you."

Brianna nodded, unable to find her voice to reply.

Xander lightened the mood. "Loved the belly rubs by the way." He winked. "Just not the baths."

She grinned and ran her nails over his stomach, tickling him. Xander purred, then his gorgeous green eyes turned serious.

"Now it"s my turn to take care of you," he said, his voice full of hope. "If you"ll let me."

Teasing, Brianna rolled one shoulder. "Well if you insist," she said breezily. Her thoughts wandered to the forbidden love spell that had started this amazing chain of events. She furrowed her brow in worry. Xander must have read her unease.

"What is it?"

"What if Council finds out about the spell? What if it falls into the wrong hands? Can you ABC Amber LIT Converter

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imagine the mayhem that would take place in our town?" Brianna placed her palm on his cheek. "I"d hate to go before Council." She widened her eyes and screwed up her face.

"What if they turn me into an animal, and I"m lost to roam the earth for decades. Now that I found you, I don"t ever want to lose you."

He closed his hand over hers and squeezed. "No worries, my sweet. It takes a hell of a lot more than one little love spell before Council steps in and reprimands. Trust me, I know."

She worried her lip. "Still…"

"Come here." He eased her onto her back and addressed her worries. His smile was slow, inviting. A warm palm cupped her face. "If you go down, Brianna I"m going with you. I promise you that."

Her heart thudded in her chest. God, she loved him so much it hurt. "Really, you"d do that for me?"

"Of course." A wicked grin curved his gorgeous lips. "But if we"re going to go down together, maybe we should practice."

She crinkled her nose, perplexed. "Practice?"

He touched his mouth to hers and then slowly slid down her body. His lashes fluttered against her flesh, his tongue did mysterious things to her nerve endings. "Yes, practice. I"ll go first." He spread her legs. Wide.

When his tongue connected with her nether lips, she let out a little sigh. Her head rolled to the side. "Ah yes, practice. It is good to practice."

Going down had never felt so good.

"And maybe," he murmured from deep between her legs, "I should also practice being a cop, a fireman, a warrior and even a pirate again, because you never know what Council will turn me into if we ever find ourselves in trouble."

A bubble of laughter welled up from her throat as her heart reached out to him. Love sang through her veins and filled her with happiness. When he said he was going to spend the rest of his days catering to her every whim, her every desire, he certainly meant it.

Xander slipped a finger inside her, stirring her heat, her desires. "I love how wet you get for me," he murmured, his warm breath caressing her sensitive skin. Her clit tightened and puckered in response.

He glanced up at her, his eyes filled with pure adoration.

Mayhem

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Sylvia Day

Chapter 1

SIN ANDSEX ON ASTICK, THAT WASSHANEMARKHAM.

Abigail Garvey watched the county"s "Most Eligible Bachelor" from her bedroom balcony and wondered if it would be rude to ask him to move. The driving force behind Markham Estates Master Planned housing community, Shane could have any of the unsold homes in the neighborhood, but he"d chosen the one next to hers. He was single; surely he didn"t have all that much furniture to move? And Lord knows, all of the women who"d flocked to buy a house here in an attempt to catch him wouldn"t mind having him next door.

She did, though. A lot.

Why, out of all of the homes he could have picked, did he have to move into the one that shared a yard with hers? How was a woman expected to go about her business when she had eye candy like that just a few feet away? There was no way for her to look outside her windows and not see him. Shane met with all new residents personally, and showed them around the pool, tennis courts, and gym. And in the summer…

Abby swallowed hard. In the summer, he"d be out front in shorts and bare feet washing his classic El Camino. His skin would be tanned and slick with a fine sheen of perspiration, the beautifully defined muscles of his back and arms brought into stark relief by his exertions.

He"d caught her ogling him more than a few times, his head turning as he sensed her perusal, his teeth white as he grinned and waved.

Like he was doing right now.

Wincing, and offering a pained smile, Abby lifted her hand and waved back. Shane was standing beside another tall, buxom Mrs. Markham-wannabe. He was dressed in loose-fitting jeans and a cream-colored sweater, looking like aGQ advertisement. With his slightly too-long black hair and dark eyes, he made a striking complement to the new resident, who wore a lipstick red pantsuit.

Why couldn"t he move next toher? The way she was staring at him raptly, the woman looked like she"d love the proximity to such "prime husband material."

Shane had laughed it off when Abby congratulated him on the magazine"s illustrious designation for him, his eyes bright with amusement.

"Don"t believe everything you read," he"d said, brushing back the thick lock of hair that was always falling over his brow.

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"What"s the false part?" she"d asked, genuinely curious. "You have a secret wife somewhere? A girlfriend? Are you in debt up to your ears? Or maybe you"re a criminal hiding under a secret identity?"

"None of the above."

"Hmm. That"s what I thought."

Shaking her head at how ridiculous it was to have a crush at her age, Abby stepped back into the warmth of her bedroom and closed the sliding glass door behind her. She really had to stop thinking about Shane. Five months now they"d been neighbors, and he had never once tried to hit on her or ask her out. Which meant he wasn"t going to.

Not that she didn"t understand why, because she did. She was ordinary, he was extraordinary. Like oil and water, they just didn"t mix.

Descending the stairs to the first floor, Abby tightened her customary ponytail, then collected the supersize zip ties and witch decoration she"d bought for her Halloween bash, and headed outside.

Throwing a costume party had been an annual tradition for her when she lived in California, and she was determined to stick to it here in Massachusetts. She didn"t have near as many friends here yet, just her coworkers and Kayla, who lived up the street, but Abby was an optimist. She was hopeful that the flyers she"d posted on the store e-bulletin and the community center here at Markham Estates would be enough to attract at least a small crowd.

As she opened the front door, Abby was hit by a blast of chilly autumn air. Shivering, she reached back inside to grab her favorite multicolored scarf from the carved wooden coatrack.

She was still becoming accustomed to having four seasons after years of living in California"s temperate climate. Even dressed as she was, with sheepskin boots, lined pants, and a sweater jacket, she was cold. But this was what she"d wanted, a change of scene.

When she had been offered the position of regional director—a big bump up from department store manager—she"d leapt at the opportunity, considering it a perk of being single that she could move across the country on a whim.

A quick glance across the street showed that Shane and the lady in red had moved on, so Abby hopped down the short steps to the yellowed lawn and set to work attaching the

“witch smashing into a tree” decoration to the sapling in her yard. It was obviously meant for a larger trunk, but she‟d always wanted one, and this was the first time she had ever owned a tree, so she was going to make the darn thing work whether it liked it or not.

“Here, let me help with that.”

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Abby nearly jumped out her skin at the deep rumble of Shane‟s voice behind her. She spun around quickly, her heart racing. “Jeez! You scared me half to death.”

“Sorry.” He looked shameless with that sinful grin she loved. “If you hold Witchy up where you want her to hang, I‟ll secure it with the ties.”

“Thanks.” She hoped she wasn‟t drooling. It was the rare occasion when they stood this close to each other. She preferred to lust after him from afar. Less embarrassing that way.

Facing the tree, Abby watched Shane round the other side.

“I saw your party flyer,” he said, shooting a glance at her as he tugged on a tie. “Mind if I stop by with a friend?”

Great. Just how I want to spend Halloween, coveting Shane Markham while he hangs out with a date.

“Not at all,” she lied with mock cheerfulness. “Though I‟m not sure how lively it‟ll be. I don‟t know that many people around here yet.”

“You have a date?” He held out his hand for the other tie, and Abby passed it over, shivering as his fingers rubbed against her palm as he retrieved it. The wind blew lightly, ruffling his hair and kicking her hormones into overdrive.

What would it be like to have a man that hot in my bed?

He was so fine, she was pretty sure he could just lie there naked, and that would be enough to put a smile on her face.

“Abby?”

She loved it when he said her name. He had a rich, deep voice that reminded her of melted chocolate. Yummy.

He smiled, dazzling her for a moment, then she realized how funny it must look for her to stand there mooning over him. Disgruntled by her own behavior, Abby was tempted to invent an admirer just so she didn‟t feel so pathetic, but that wasn‟t her style, so she just shook her head.

“Haven‟t found anyone you like yet?”

“Something like that,” she muttered.

“That‟s too bad.” He yanked on the other tie and tested it to make sure it was secure. “I can introduce you to some people, if you like.”

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Fabulous. Now he‟s setting me up with his buddies.

“Uh…Thanks, but that‟s okay. I‟m fine.”

Shane stepped around the tree and stood behind her, admiring their handiwork.

Immediately the scent of his cologne teased her nostrils, and her skin prickled with goose bumps.

“If you change your mind,” he murmured by her ear, making her shiver, “let me know.”

Abby gave a resigned sigh but managed a smile when she turned around. He was just being sweet, something he was exceptionally good at. “Sure thing. Thank you for your help.”

“Anytime,” he said easily. “What are neighbors for? Should I bring anything over tonight?

Candy? Booze? Pizza?”

“Not unless you have a particular preference for something. Otherwise, I think I‟ve got everything.”

“Alright. If you think of anything you missed, just give me a call.” He reached up and adjusted her scarf. “See you in a bit.”

She watched him walk across the lawn to his door, admiring his fine ass and long legs.

Then, chastising herself for staring, Abby went into the house, grabbed her keys, and went out to her car. As usual, she had everything she needed for everyone else but still had to get the things she needed for herself—costume and props.

Picking a different costume every year was one of the highlights of the holiday for her. She liked pretending to be someone, or something else for a few hours. When she was a kid, she used to dream of being an actress, but she was too shy for that vocation. Dressing up for Halloween was the closest she came to acting.

This year, she‟d decided to be a fortune-teller. That choice had been adapted from belly dancer to accommodate her shyness. A belly dancer had to walk around and dance in her revealing costume. A fortune-teller could dress similarly but spend most of the night behind a table.

So Abby hopped into her Range Rover and drove across town to Conjure, the specialty store where her friend Kayla worked. Apparently they sold all sorts of things—gag gifts, magic stuff, costumes. She pulled into a spot across the street, then dodged the light traffic of their small downtown to reach the entrance. The door chimed as she entered, and she was immediately struck with the soothing scents of incense and spices, which made the shop feel homey and welcoming.

“Abby!” Kayla called out. “We were just talking about you.”

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“You were?” Abby smiled at the pretty blonde who stood next to her friend, noting the name tag that saidBRIANNA —OWNER. “What‟s up?”

“I was just telling Brianna that she should come to your party.”

“She absolutely should.” Reaching into her bag, Abby withdrew a flyer. She set it on the counter, and paused a moment to rub behind the ears of the handsome black cat who sat by the register. “I‟d actually be grateful if you came.”

“Oh?”

Abby wrinkled her nose and glanced at Kayla. “Shane‟s coming. With a date.”

“Ugh.” Kayla shook her head. “The man‟s blind. Seriously. You‟re better off without him.” She glanced at her boss and explained, “Shane Markham‟s her neighbor.”

Brianna‟s eyebrows rose. “Lucky. He‟s hot.”

The cat growled an ominous warning. Abby yanked her hand back quickly. “Yikes. Sorry.”

She turned back to Kayla. “Maybe you should show me those costumes you were talking about.”

While following her friend to the rear corner of the store, Abby perused the many offerings on the shelves. She caught up a small handbasket set at the end of the aisle for customer use and picked up a crystal ball and some pretty beaded bracelets.

“I set this one aside for you,” Kayla said, turning to reveal a purple gypsy costume. “I figured you‟d like it because it‟s your favorite color, but now I think it‟s even more perfect because it‟s the most revealing one we‟ve got!”

“Jeez. I can‟t wear that.” Abby eyed the sheer voluminous pants with the splits down the sides and the teeny tiny halter top with its dangling gold coin decorative trim. “It‟s indecent!”

“Exactly! Show Shane what he‟s missing.”

“Yeah, my lack of breasts?” Snorting, Abby gestured at her less-than-ample chest. “The man dates women who look like Carmen Elektra. Why the hell would I want to point out my deficiencies?”

“Whatever. You‟ve got a great athletic figure. Flaunt it!”

“It‟s cold!”

“So turn the heater up. It‟s your house.” Kayla handed over the costume and moved back to the counter.

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Abby stared at the plum-colored confection in her hand. Despite how much skin the outfit revealed, she really loved the hue, and a quick glance at the others on the rack told her she wouldn‟t like any of them near as much. She had a couple shrug sweaters. One of them might work as a cover-up…

“Just buy it!” Kayla yelled from the counter.

So Abby did. Then she collected her purchases and waved bye before crossing the street back to her car. She set the bag on the passenger seat beside her and paused, noting the flyer that stuck out of one of the handle holes. It was yellowed and torn, reminding her of an Old West wanted poster. Curious, she pulled it out while she waited for the heater to kick in.

Mystical, magical, mayhem, and more

Bring me a lover with the stamina of four.

A lover to awaken my darkest desires

And last through one night stoking the fires.

Mystical, magical, mayhem, and more

Let the lover of my dreams walk through the door.

“The stamina of four, huh?” Abby shoved the handwritten advertisement back into the bag.

“I wish.”

Putting the Rover into reverse, she looked over her shoulder and backed up.

Time to get ready.

Chapter 2

ABBY HEAVED OUT HER BREATH AND TWISTED FROM SIDE TO SIDE,trying to

see if the rear of her costume was as revealing as the front. She was pretty sure it was.

The sheer leggings of the low-slung pants were even more shocking when worn. From what she could tell from the mirror, the lower curves of her butt cheeks were clearly visible.

And the tiny tube top was smaller than it had looked in the store. It certainly couldn"t have been worn by a woman with a larger bust. Abby"s B-cup breasts were nearly too much for it.

She"d been debating whether or not to wear one of her older costumes for at least thirty minutes. Her shyness urged her to cover up. The frustrated sex kitten inside her knew she ABC Amber LIT Converter

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looked pretty damn hot and wanted Shane to see it. She"d pulled her brown hair up into a thick ponytail at the top of her head and her blue eyes—which she considered to be her only laudable feature—were heavily rimmed in black eyeliner and framed by thick mascara-coated lashes.

The doorbell rang, and Abby looked at her alarm clock on the nightstand. Six o"clock. The party didn"t start for another hour yet. Curious as to who her visitor could be, she hurried down the hall. The bell chimed again, and she jogged the rest of the way.

“I"m coming!” she yelled, skidding to a halt on the tiled entryway and pulling open the door. “Whoa.”

Shane Markham stood on her porch, looking like an exotic fantasy. Wearing black-and-silver harem pants and a tiny silver vest, he was dressed like a genie or a sultan. The broad expanse of his beautifully defined chest and abs were mouthwateringly exposed, as were his delicious biceps and forearms.

“Hi,” he greeted in that low rumble she loved. “Wow. You look great.”

“Hi. You, too.”

“We match.” He gestured down the length of her.

“Must be fate.”Oh jeez. I did notjust say that.

“Must be.” He smiled. “I thought I"d come over and help you get things ready.”

Yikes! An hour alone with a half-naked Shane?

She blinked. “Uh…You don"t have to do that.”

His smile widened into a devastating grin, and her heart stopped. Then began racing. “I know I don"t have to. Can I come in? It"s cold out here.”

“Uh, yes. Of course. Sorry.” Abby backed into the house and pulled the door with her.

“I love your place,” he said, striding in with the innate confidence she found so appealing.

His gaze swept across her living room, with its hardwood floors, deep red rugs, and oversized chairs in shades of taupe and brown. It was a space that was neither too feminine nor too masculine. She"d picked everything out with comfort and relaxation in mind, because she worked long hours and liked her downtime to be restful.

“I may have to start hanging out here when I want some peace and quiet.”

Abby laughed to hide the way her tummy flipped at the thought of curling up on her big ABC Amber LIT Converter

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couch with him. He"d be dressed in sweats, and her hand would slide up beneath his shirt to feel those amazing abs before dipping beneath his waistband and gripping his thick cock.

She would stroke him, making him hard and panting for her. Then she"d straddle him right there in the living room and ride him.

Yum.

She shivered, her body aching for his.God, I've wanted him for so long.

“So”—he looked at her—“what do you need done?”

Abby led him to the kitchen where she kept her to-do list. He stood behind her, able to see the items clearly over her shoulder.

“I'm impressed,” he murmured, the rich texture of his voice and the smell of his cologne driving her crazy. “You sure know how to plan one hell of a party.”

She shrugged. “I enjoy it.”

“I like that about you.” His dark eyes met hers when she looked at him. “Work hard. Play hard.”

She stared at his lips, wondering what it would be like for him to kiss her. If she rose to her tiptoes she would only reach his chin. He'd have to bend a little to kiss a woman her height.

Or save himself the trouble and date tall models like the ones she'd seen leaving his house in the mornings.

She'd be climbing into her Rover to head to work and there they were, rushing to start their day. Willowy, beautiful women with kiss-swollen lips, dazed eyes, and big grins. They'd wave and call out a cheerful greeting as they practically danced to their cars. Abby always wondered what it would be like to wake up next to Shane. Was he amorous in the mornings? Would he reach for her, make love to her, ride her deep and slow with lazy expertise until she began her day with a wondrous orgasm?

“Where's your friend?” she asked, wincing inwardly at the breathlessness of her query.

“Tony's girlfriend works until closing tonight, so they'll be over a little after ten.”

“Your friend's a guy?”

Shane's brows lifted. “Yeah. I hope that's okay.”

“Sure.” Relief flooded her, quickly followed by anxiety. She didn't know which was worse—Shane arriving with a date or hooking up with someone at the party. Lord knew the female guests would be all over him. “I just thought you were bringing a date.”

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“I'm not seeing anyone right now.”

“Oh.” She looked away to hide her pleasure at the news, then busied herself with ripping open candy bags. She dumped the contents into various Halloween-themed serving bowls, and Shane stood beside her, helping. Together they managed the task within moments, then moved on to setting up the spiked punch with a big block of dry ice tossed in to create an atmospheric fog.

“I bet you're great to have around for the holidays,” he said with an indulgent smile. “My idea of decorating is tying a red bow to the doorknocker.”

“No lights?”

He raised a finger to his lips in a gesture for secrecy. “Don't tell anyone, but I keep the lights up all year long. They're clear rope lights, so no one notices them until they're pointed out.”

Abby laughed. “That's cheating!”

“Hey! Some of my buddies only hang one string around their living room windows, if that.

I should get some points.”

“Maybe.”

“I'm a guy. I need help with this stuff.” He bumped shoulders with her. “Maybe I can convince you to help me out?”

She shook her head. “You won't need my help then.”

“Trust me,” he said dryly. “I'll still be a guy in December.”

She bumped him right back. “Yeah, but you won't be a single guy. Your new girl can domesticate you.”

“I guess.” He ran a hand through his hair. “So what's next on the list?”

“My table.” At his curious look, she explained, “I'm a fortune-teller, so I have a table and crystal ball as part of my costume.”

“Ah, props. Again, I‟m impressed.”

The doorbell rang, and they both froze, then they turned their gazes in unison to look at the wall clock.

“Wow, time flies,” he said with a wink, setting his hand at the small of her back and ABC Amber LIT Converter

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escorting her to the door. The familiarity was agonizing for Abby. The feel of Shane‟s palm against her bare skin made sharp needles of awareness spread along every nerve ending.

They reached the foyer and he turned the knob, startling Kayla and her date, who waited on the porch. “Well, don‟t you two look cute? I love it when couples wear matching costumes.”

Narrowing her eyes in warning, Abby showed her guests to the living room, where the stereo played a repeating selection of Halloween CDs. Various entertainments were set up in the corners, like bobbing for apples and a box where guests had to stick their hand inside and guess the contents. She hurried back to the entryway as the bell rang again, and found the next hour of her evening spent shuttling partygoers from the door to wherever the largest congregation happened to be.

She was finally taking a break and downing a glass of punch when Shane joined her in the kitchen.

“Having fun yet?” he asked with a mischievous smile.

“Are you?”

“Why don‟t you tell me my fortune and find out?”

Abby laughed. She knew he was enjoying himself. The female guests flocked to him like flies on honey, and his deep rich laughter followed her wherever she went.

“Come on.” He took her empty paper cup with its black cats in witches‟ hats and tossed it in the trash before linking fingers with hers and tugging her into the living room. There, in the corner, waited her small, scarf-draped table and two chairs. Shane pulled her seat out and saw her settled, then he rounded the table and sat, waiting expectantly.

“You‟re kidding,” she said.

“Nope.”

“Okay.” She rubbed the crystal ball with both hands. “I see lots of home sales and a life-size plastic snowman in your yard at Christmas.”

“Now who‟s cheating?” He leaned back in the chair and crossed his arms, displaying his scrumptious arms to perfection. “I want to know,” he murmured in a low, provocative voice, “what does my future hold?”

Startled by the tone of the request, and thrown off-balance by the way he was watching her with those heavy-lidded eyes, Abby blurted out the first mystical-sounding thing that popped into her head. It wasn‟t until he froze, unblinking, staring at her with brooding intensity that she wondered what she‟d said.

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“A lover to awaken your darkest desires?”

She recoiled into the seat with a hand clapped over her mouth. “Uh…”Oh jeez!

“Are we talking about your desires or mine?”

“Gah…”

Shane unfolded, leaning against the table in a way that opened his vest and revealed the beauty of his powerful chest. “Are you, by chance, hitting on me, Abby?”

Swallowing hard, she shook her head violently. “Of course not.”

He arched a dark brow.

“Seriously,” she insisted. “You‟re not my type.”

His other brow rose to match the first. “How would you know?” he challenged.

“How does anyone know? You just…know.”

“That‟s not very scientific.”

“Huh?” Her brain couldn‟t seem to catch up with the conversation. She was supposed to be reading his damn fortune. “You‟ll become very rich and live happily ever after.”

Pushing her chair back, Abby rose and skirted the table. Shane was right there with her.

“Oh no,” he rumbled, sidestepping into her path. “We‟re not done yet.”

She swallowed hard and tilted her head back to look up at him. “I didn‟t mean to make you uncomfortable. Just forget I said anything.”

His slow smile made her shiver. “No.” Lifting his hand, his fingertips brushed from her shoulder to the hollow of her throat in a featherlight caress. Goose bumps flared across her skin. “You say I‟m not your type. I say I might be.”

Her mouth fell open.“You?”

“Honey, you‟re hell on a man‟s ego.” He cupped the back of her neck, wrapped an arm around her waist, and tugged her closer.

Abby was so shocked by his advance she didn‟t know what to say. Then he brushed his lips across hers, and she melted. The subtle scent of his cologne teased her nostrils, making her breasts swell and ache with longing.

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“You only date beautiful women,” she whispered against his mouth, her hands moving without volition to his lean hips.

“You‟re a beautiful woman.” He tilted his head and deepened his kiss, his tongue gliding along hers in a lush, warm lick. She moaned, helpless to the realization of her fantasy.

“Get a room!” someone shouted with a laugh. The effect was the same as a bucket of ice water. Abby yanked away, hazarding a glance at Shane before turning quickly and fleeing down the hall.

“Abby.”

She didn‟t look back, she couldn‟t. The way he was looking at her…

Heat swept across her skin. They‟d been neighbors for five long months, and he‟dnever looked at her like that. She‟d seriously consider that he was inebriated except she‟d tasted his mouth and knew that wasn‟t the case.

She lifted shaking fingertips to her tingling lips.Lord, the man knows how to kiss.

“Abby.” Warm arms caught her about the waist, and she flailed a moment in surprise.

“Wait.”

Shane‟s breath gusted across her ear. The feel of his bare chest pressing against the nearly naked length of her back was both heaven and hell. “We‟re not done yet.”

Chapter 3

ASSHANE"S LARGE HAND SLIPPED BENEATHABBY"S TOP ANDcupped her

breast, she whimpered softly. The party was behind them, just a few feet away, and Shane Markham was fondling her intimately. His fingers tugged at her hard nipple in a rhythmic milking motion that made her pussy slick with desire.

“Shane,” she breathed, her head falling back against his shoulder. His firm lips pressed to the side of her neck, his tongue flicking rapidly over her fluttering pulse. “What are you doing?”

He rolled his hips into her, revealing the hard swell of his erection. “You say I"m not your type, Abby?” Shane"s voice was a rough rumble of sound. “You want a lover who can fuck you all night, in all the ways you want, and all the ways you didn"t know to want.” His fingers tightened on her tormented nipple and his teeth sank gently into the tender flesh of her neck. “I"m your man, baby.”

Writhing in his embrace, Abby was torn between finding out what caused the drastic change in Shane and just going along for the ride. In the end, her deep craving for him won ABC Amber LIT Converter

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out.

“The party,” she reminded softly, gasping when he cupped her pussy through her costume.

“We both need to take the edge off. You know we can"t go back in there like this.”

“You mean a Quickie?”

Shane slipped his tongue into her ear, and she shuddered violently, creaming. “I promise you"ll come more than once,” he said gruffly, his fingertips rubbing at her clit.

“Oh!” Against her will, her hips rocked into his hand.

“What"s this room right here?” he asked, nudging her toward the nearest door.

“M-my home office.”

“Perfect.” He steered her in that direction.

“It"s not,” she protested, as the hand between her legs withdrew to turn the knob. He urged her in, then kicked the door gently closed behind them. “There"s no lock.”

“Maybe someone will come in,” he purred. “Maybe one of your friends out there will get to see me banging you. Would you like that?”

“Shane!” Abby spun to face him, stepping backward in quick retreat. The image his words brought to mind made her pant. The fantasy of having sex so hot it was unstoppable, even under threat of discovery, had been with her a long time. “What"s gotten into you?”

“Aren"t you more curious about what"s about to get into you?” He stepped closer.

Predatory. Intent.

She swallowed hard. As he came to a halt before her, she reached out with one hand and steadied herself with the back of her desk chair. He was so close, she could feel the heat from his skin.

“Tell me the truth, Abby.” He cupped her face in both hands. “Am I really not your type?

Do you not want me?”

This was it.The Moment. Take it or leave it. Walk out of here with a wet pussy, aching nipples, and her heart. Or stumble out with a dopey grin and the surety of heartache.

Her eyes closed on a deep breath.

“I want,” she whispered, then she melted as he kissed her with such tenderness she could hardly stand it. After his zero-to-sixty pounce of just a few minutes before, the leisurely ABC Amber LIT Converter

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mating of firm lips and deep, stroking tongue caught her completely off guard.

“I don‟t have a condom,” he said, his words swallowed by her open mouth. “We‟ll have to improvise.”

No way. She wanted all of him. Now that she was decided, she wanted every hot, thick inch she‟d felt against her lower back.

“It‟s okay.” Abby turned away to open her desk drawer, a movement that caused her computer to come out of sleep mode and light up the room with a soft blue glow.

He looked over her shoulder at the array of condoms and whistled.

“One of the gals at work just had a bachelorette party,” she explained. “I hot-glued these to lollipop sticks as favors.” She withdrew a Magnum and set it on the desk.

“Is it my lucky night or what?” His tone was filled with warm amusement as his hands caught her waistband. He lowered to a crouch, tugging her pants to the floor.

She stiffened in shock.

“Step out and spread your legs.”

“You‟re going too fast!”

“You said we‟re in a hurry,” he reminded in a dark-as-sin voice. He lifted her right leg and tugged its foot free of both shoe and pants cuff. “If we‟re not, recant and we‟ll take our time in a more suitable venue.”

A swell of laughter from the living room, which shared a wall with her office, decided her.

“Hurry!”

“That‟s what I thought.”

Standing, Shane turned her to face away from him and mantled her body with his own, cupping her exposed pussy with a possessive grip. He parted her, then stroked through her slickness. “Good, you‟re hot and wet.” Two fingers slipped inside her, and Abby leaned heavily into the desk to stay upright. “You sure I can‟t change your mind, Abby? We can sneak out and go to my place.”

“I‟m having a party!” But her voice lacked the conviction it had earlier.

“Later, then. I want you spread out on my bed so I can ride you long and slow.” Shane finger-fucked her pussy with deep, expert strokes. The feel of his hand rubbing rhythmically against her sensitive inner thighs made her wetter.

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“Shane…” Her nails dug into her mousepad.

“Hang on.” He slid his fingers free, pausing a moment to rub her clit in slow, seductive circles before he took care of the logistics. She heard the tear of a condom wrapper, followed by the sounds of latex stretching. Then one hand was exerting downward pressure on her back, the other was positioning the head of his cock to take her.

“Here you go,” he murmured, bending his knees and pressing up into her.

“Hurry.” She felt so empty she ached with it, her pussy spasming in tormented impatience.

“Please…hurry.”

Shane made a little soothing sound as she writhed. “Hold still, baby, and I‟ll fill you.”

Abby gripped her desk for dear life as she realized how damn big he was. In her semi-bent over position he was almost unbearably huge. She whimpered.

“Easy,” he crooned, stroking the straining length of her spine. He lifted one of her legs and urged her to rest it sideways on the desktop so that she was spread wide. “You‟re tight, and I‟m so hard my dick aches, but I‟ll fit. Just relax.”

As he continued to slide into her, forcing her swollen tissues to part with the fat tip of his cock, she began to shake with anticipation and heady lust.

Shane stilled, then reached around her, taking control of her mouse. She watched in confusion, wondering what he was doing, then a moment later

an image of them appeared on her monitor.

She gasped.

He plucked her camera off the shelf and set it on the desk, then he flicked on the under-shelf light. Instantly an up-close-and-personal view of his long, thick cock breaching her pussy was there on her twenty-inch flat screen. The lips of her sex were dark pink and glistening with her arousal, the skin stretched tight to accommodate his size.

“Oh!” Abby sucked in a breath as one her darkest fantasies came to life before her eyes.

She licked dry lips as she watched another inch of delicious dick slide into her.

“That‟s it,” he coaxed, his lips to her ear, his hands reaching around to pull down her top and cup her aching breasts. “It turns you on to watch. You just got twice as hot and twice as wet.”

He began rocking into her again, slow and easy, advancing and retreating, satisfying her desire to videotape sex to watch later. She‟d never done it. The thought of losing a tape like that terrified her. But this…this wasn‟t being recorded, and it was having the same effect.

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Shane‟s fingers tugged on her nipples in time with his heated thrusts. The flared head of his cock rubbed a sensitive spot deep inside her, and she climaxed with a soft cry, her pussy rippling along as much of him as she‟d managed to take.

She felt him shudder behind her with a low curse. “You‟re going to make me come,” he growled, his fingers tightening to a pinch.

“Go ahead,” she suggested, her voice slurred with pleasure.

“Not until I‟m balls deep in you. I want to feel you do that again, but with my dick all the way inside.”

“Okay.” Abby giggled. Like she was going to say no to that.

He grunted softly as another thick inch sank home. “If I make it in you without coming first, I deserve a damn medal.”

“I don‟t have any of those,” she said in a dreamy voice, her heavy-lidded eyes riveted to her monitor. “How about a blow job instead?”

Shane‟s hips jerked forward, shoving him deeper into her. “Jesus, Abby!”

“I‟d really like that,” she murmured. “You‟re so big. I think sucking your cock could make me orgasm.”

“Damn it.” One hand dropped to her hip, holding her in place as he fucked upward in fierce digs, pumping high and hard and deep, making her cry out with every lunge. Then he was in her to the hilt, a thick, throbbing presence, and she was melting.

“Oh yeah…” he breathed, his arms wrapping tight around her, his mouth pressing feverish kisses along the top of her shoulder. “Christ, you‟re hot, Abby. You‟re burning me up.”

Reaching over her shoulder, she slid her fingers into his thick, silky hair. The simple touch seemed to be too much for him, urging him into frantic movements, his heavy balls smacking against her as he shafted her pussy in long, pumping drives.

Abby watched it all on the monitor, her body quaking with the intensity of her arousal, moaning when his hand reached lower and he rubbed her clit. She keened softly, coming hard, clenching rhythmically around his driving cock.

“Yeah,” he urged hoarsely, his chin on her shoulder so he could watch, too. “Keep coming.

That feels amazing.”

Laughter and voices sounded directly outside the door, someone looking for the bathroom and another guest trying to help. Abby tensed, the added anxiety only increasing her pleasure. She‟d orgasmed twice already, yet suddenly she felt ready to do it again.

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“Maybe they‟ll check in here,” Shane suggested darkly, his chest heaving against her back, his fingers working her clit in time with his thrusts. “Then they can see me fucking you. I‟ll make you come while they watch. Would you like that, Abby?”

She climaxed in violent shudders, her blood rushing in her ears, her breathing loud and labored in the small room.

“Yes!” he hissed, thrusting deep and grinding against her, ejaculating so hard she could feel him come. All the while, he clung to her, his arms tight bands around her torso.

“Abby…my God…”

In one delicious encounter, her every fantasy came to life. She closed her eyes, memorizing every nuance. Every sensation. Zealously storing away these precious moments to relive later.

“Abby.”

Reality intruded. The note of regret in Shane‟s voice made her stomach knot. Now that he‟d taken the edge off his hunger, he realized what he‟d done. And the ramifications.

She moaned softly as he withdrew his cock. He shushed her with a gentle hum. “I‟m sorry.”

Abby felt like crying. “It‟s okay.” She sucked in a shaky breath. “I understand.”

“Then you‟re further ahead than I,” he muttered, yanking tissues from the box on her desk and wrapping them around the condom. Tossing the wad into the trash can, he began straightening his clothing and hers with quiet efficiency. “I have no idea what got into me.”

“I said it‟s okay, Shane. Forget it.” She never would, but that was for her alone to know.

He hugged her from behind and kissed her temple. “It‟s not okay. Our first time shouldn‟t have been like this, a quick fuck in your office. But I couldn‟t wait. Even now, I‟m trying to figure out how to get all these damn people out of here so I can have you again.”

Wide-eyed, Abby turned and found herself pulled tight to Shane‟s hard body. He cupped her face and took her mouth with infinite tenderness.

“Thank you,” he whispered, his lips moving against hers. “I‟ll make it up to you at my place.”

“Anytime,” she whispered back.

Squeezing her eyes shut, she gave up any pretense of keeping her heart intact.

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Chapter 4

ABBY WOKE TO THE WONDERFUL FEELING OF A WARM, HARD BODYat her

back. Blinking away sleep, she took in her surroundings and recognized the dark blue ceiling painted with little stars. Stars that had backdropped Shane‟s powerful shoulders while he thrust deep inside her. Over and over. For hours.

Shane‟s house. Shane‟s bedroom. Shane‟sbed.

Passionate memories from the night before flooded her sleep-fuzzy mind and stiffened her frame. Turning her head slowly, she spotted the gorgeous sleep-tousled man beside her and pinched herself.

Nothing changed.

Oh wow.

The party had lasted until one in the morning, but Shane had lasted all night. A quick lift of her head to look at the clock showed it was now almost two in the afternoon. Stamina of four. Shane had it in spades. No wonder the supermodels who left his place wore grins as wide as the Joker‟s.

Sadly, Abby wasn‟t smiling. She couldn‟t. She was too scared of the future and how things would be between them in the harsh light of day. Freed from their costumes and the anonymity they afforded.

Unable to face any morning-after awkwardness, she slipped carefully from the bed without waking Shane and gathered up the pieces of her discarded costume. She paused a moment at the foot of the bed, taking in the sight of him facing her vacated side, his chest bare and beautiful, a dark blue sheet draped low over his hips.

Her mouth watered as she thought of the rest of him. He was truly delicious, in every sense of the word. She‟d never forget the feel of his big cock in her mouth, sliding deep and withdrawing. His hands fisted in the bedsheets, his back arching with guttural cries of her name and pleas for her to stop. Pleas for her not to stop. Until he couldn‟t hold back any longer.

Shaking her head, she tiptoed from the room and down the stairs. She dressed in the living room before peeking out the crack of the barely opened front door. It would be a damn miracle if she made it to her house without being seen by someone. She didn‟t know how she would bear it if everyone in the neighborhood knew about her and Shane. It would be impossible to pretend nothing had happened.

It took a few moments to build up her courage, then Abby made a run for it, sprinting across the yellowed grass to her side-yard gate and slipping into her backyard. She retrieved her spare key from the secret compartment beneath a cement frog and entered ABC Amber LIT Converter

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through her kitchen. Once inside, the lingering smell of now-extinguished pumpkin spice candles reminded her of Halloween and brought tears to her eyes.

Lack of sleep, she told herself. There was no other reason for her to be so sappy over something as wonderful as a night spent with Shane Markham. But she needed to hear that from someone else, so she exhaled harshly and picked up the phone.

“Conjure,” answered a female voice on the third ring.

“Hi, Brianna. It‟s Abby.” She tried to sound cheerful. “Can I talk to Kayla a minute? It won‟t take long, I promise.”

“Kayla‟s not here today. The shop‟s closed. I just stopped by to pick up a couple things and answered the phone out of habit.”

“Oh.” She didn‟t mean to sound so disappointed. It just came out that way.

“Are you okay?” Brianna‟s friendly voice was filled with concern. “I hope you don‟t mind my prying, but you don‟t sound the way I would expect you to after a night spent with Shane Markham.”

Abby managed a short laugh. “That was a fluke. He‟s been nothing but distantly friendly to me the entire five months I‟ve lived here.”

“Uh, honey, I‟ve seen distant friendliness, and that kiss he planted on you in the living room isn‟t it.”

“Oh jeez.” So much for hiding the truth. Everyone she knew had shown up for her party last night, and they‟d witnessed Shane‟s pounce. And her surrender. “You know what that was? It was that flyer from your shop, the one about having stamina and boinking like bunnies all night. He put me on the spot for a fortune-telling and I blurted that poem.Bam.

He got horny as hell. He‟s single right now, so I think I was just convenient.” She sighed.

“How depressing is that?”

“Oh shit,” Brianna breathed. “Shit, shit, shit.”

“Yeah.” Abby rubbed the back of her neck and rested her hip against the tiled edge of her kitchen counter. “That pretty much sums it up.”

A long silence followed. Abby opened her mouth to say good-bye when Brianna spoke first. “Abby, what are your thoughts on magic?”

Last night with Shane had been magic. If she inhaled deeply, she could still smell him on her skin. “If you‟re talking about Feng Shui calming your mood, I agree. If you‟re talking about hocus-pocus-abracadabra, I‟m not a believer.”

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Brianna groaned. “That‟s what I thought.”

“Sorry.”

“Don‟t worry about it. But I do have a favor to ask. If you‟ve got a chair nearby, could you sit in it? I‟ve got something to tell you, and you might be better off sitting down.”

Considering that her legs felt like jelly from being spread most of the night, Abby didn‟t have a problem with the request.

And a few minutes later, she was grateful for the seat.

Shane blinked his eyes open and stretched, wincing at the unaccustomed soreness in his ass and thighs. As memories of the night before came back in a delightful rush, a smile started inside and spread outward into a grin.

Abby.

Sweet little Abby, whom he‟d lusted after for far too long, had finally come around.

If he‟d known she wanted him rough and dirty, he would have indulged her earlier. Of course, coming on to a woman like a freight train wasn‟t his usual style. Even now he was shocked at the things he‟d said and done to her. He wasn‟t the hot-and-heavy type, as witnessed by the five months he‟d waited for some sign,any sign that she might be interested in being more than neighbors. Then he‟d seen her in that sexy costume, and he‟d instantly been put on a short leash. When she recited that poem about fucking all night, he‟d been unleashed. Done. Cooked.

Rolling to his side, he moved to tug Abby closer and found the spot beside him empty. He frowned and sat up, looking around for her costume or any clue that she was still in his house somewhere. The bathroom maybe, or the kitchen. But there was nothing.

“Abby?” he called out, only to be greeted by silence.

He ran a hand through his hair and sighed, resigning himself to getting out of bed.

After they cleaned up, he wanted to head into town with her and grab something to eat.

Then they could pick out some wine and groceries to make dinner. Maybe some movies, too. The thought of spending a quiet evening at home getting to know Abby better filled him with contentment.

Five months was a long time to wait to get a relationship started, but he knew Abby was worth it. He‟d known it the very first day he‟d shown her around the neighborhood. Fresh from California, she was adventurous and ambitious, with a fun-loving personality that ABC Amber LIT Converter

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enabled her to make friends quickly. Combine that with fabulous eyes and a great ass, and Abigail Garvey was his idea of the perfect date. After last night, he knew she was better than a great date, she was his dream girl.

God, the things she‟d done to him…the sounds she made when he was deep in her…the way she looked at him with those blue eyes…

He was head over heels. He‟d say he was pussy-whipped, but the sex was just a bonus on top of all the other things he liked about her. There was no doubt in his mind—he was ready to settle into a committed relationship with a wonderful woman who just happened to push all his buttons.

So, with a spring in his step, he headed to the shower. In his impatience to see Abby again, he rushed, towel-drying quickly before tugging on a pair of well-worn jeans and a black sweater. He shoved his wallet in his back pocket and condoms in his front pocket, then grabbed his keys and left his house, crossing the lawn to ring Abby‟s doorbell.

He rang twice before she answered. The door swung inward, and he found himself catching the jamb for support when he saw her. The lithe body he adored was wrapped up in a thick white robe, and her hair was piled on top of her head in a matching white towel.

She blew him away.

“Hi,” he said, grinning like an idiot and not caring.

“Hi.”

Warning bells went off, and he took a deep breath, trying to figure out why she sounded and looked so distant. “Can I come in?”

Her small hand fidgeted at her lapels. “I haven‟t cleaned up yet,” she said in a small voice.

“The place isn‟t fit for company.”

Shane frowned. “Well, lucky for me, I‟m not company.” He straightened and set his hands at her waist, backing her into the house and kicking the door closed behind him.

“Shane…”

He did what he‟d wanted to do since he woke up, he kissed her, holding her face still and tilted upward so he could lick deep inside the velvety softness of her mouth. His eyes slid closed on a low groan, and he rested his forehead against hers. “I wish you‟d been there when I woke up. We could have showered together.”

“Shane.” Her small hands came up to circle his wrists. “You don‟t know what you‟re doing.”

“I know exactly what I‟m doing,” he said gruffly, pulling back to look at her red-rimmed ABC Amber LIT Converter

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eyes. At first he thought it was because of the costume makeup she‟d worn the night before.

Now, he strongly suspected she‟d been crying, which is not what a guy wanted to see after a night of hot sex. “It‟s whatyou‟re doing that has me confused.”

She gave a shaky exhale and tried to step back. He wouldn‟t let her. “You‟re sweet, Shane, but this is unnecessary. I‟m letting you off the hook.”

Arching a brow, he said dryly, “I like being hooked.”

“Listen. Just go home. In a few hours, you‟ll look back at all this and wonder what the hell you were thinking.”

“Damn straight. I‟ll be wondering why the hell I left when all I want is to be with you.”

Linking their hands together, he tugged her into the living room and sat, pulling her into his lap. Her robe parted and bared silky smooth legs. He rubbed them compulsively, unable to resist the urge to touch. “What‟s going on?”

She was silent for so long, he began to wonder if she was going to say anything. Then she started talking. Conjure, the magic shop. A flyer. Cat‟s paw. Created a spell. She took it home by accident. She recited it, he fell under it, and all the toe-curling sex that came after it was a bit of magical mayhem.

“Okay”—he ran a hand through his hair—“you‟re saying sleeping with me is your darkest desire, so we‟ll hang on to that part. The rest of it is just nuts, so we‟ll toss that out.”

“Shane.” She sighed.

“Be serious, Abby. You find it easier to believe that I was under some Halloween curse…spell…whatever, than to believe that I have a genuine interest in you? All because of this bizarre story told to you by a lady who owns a magic gag gift shop?”

Abby winced. “Sounds crazy, I know, and I‟m not a believer in the occult, but you‟ve never been interested in me before now. It‟s either we have no explanation for your behavior, or we have her spell.”

“Bullshit.” He smiled grimly when her eyes widened at his language. “I‟ve had the hots for you for months. From the day you bought your house, actually. I really liked how excited you were about moving, and I admired the guts it took to pack up and move across the country by yourself.

“I watched how easily you made friends and how much you enjoy life. You‟re fun, Abby.

You‟re fun to be around, fun to talk to, but you‟re not frivolous. You‟ve got your head on straight. And I worship your ass. You‟ve got the best damn ass I‟ve ever seen.”

Shane watched the blush that spread across her pale cheeks. “Problem was, you never showed any romantic interest in me. So I tried to let it go. I kept dating as usual and waited ABC Amber LIT Converter

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for that initial kick in the gut I felt when I met you to fade into neighborly interest."

He sank deeper into the couch and held her gaze. "But it didn't fade. When I started thinking about you while spending time with someone else, I gave up. It wasn't fair to them to be a replacement for you, and it wasn't fair to me. I stopped dating almost two months ago."

"I didn't notice." She wiped at her wet eyes. "I guess I was too busy trying not to get caught ogling you again."

"Apparently you didn't notice how I started coming around your house more often either. I kept hoping that if you got to know me, you might become interested."

Abby reached up and tugged the towel off her head, releasing her wet hair. She held the damp cloth in her lap and stared down at it, picking restlessly at the tiny loops of cotton.

"I've been interested," she whispered.

"I see that now." He caught her chin and forced her to look at him. "You wouldn't be crying over a one-night stand. And you wouldn't have been the way you were with me last night. That was incredible."

Her mouth curved in a faint smile, and he stroked her lush bottom lip with the pad of his thumb. His hand moved on, cupping the back of her neck and drawing her close for a kiss.

Licking the seam of her lips, he murmured, "This is real, Abby. As real as it gets."

Twisting, Shane stretched out on his back and urged her to straddle him. He tugged open her belt and spread the edges of her robe wide, exposing perfect breasts, a taut tummy, and carefully trimmed curls between her legs. Catching her hand, he pushed it beneath his sweater to rest over his madly racing heart. "Feel that? That'syou . That's what you've been doing to me since I met you."

Abby stared down at the male perfection sprawled between her legs and tried to convince herself that this was actually happening. "What made you decide to go for it last night?"

Shane smiled up at her, slow and easy, his dark eyes so hot they made her skin mist with sweat. "Baby, you started talking about wanting all-night sex, and I was there. Ready and willing. Dragging women to my cave by their hair has never been my style, but blaming it on a magic spell…?" He arched a skeptical brow. "I'm more inclined to think it was just a poor guy being driven crazy by the woman he's wanted for way too long."

Her hand slipped lower and teased his nipple. He sucked in his breath sharply.

"I kinda liked the caveman thing," she purred.

His grin was wicked. "I noticed. You bring it out in me. Only you. I should be tapped out after last night, but"—he rocked upward, pressing the swell of his aroused cock into her ABC Amber LIT Converter

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bare pussy—"you do it to me."

Abby unfastened his jeans, then the little button on his boxers, adjusting the hole so his big cock thrust upward out of it. With a shrug of her shoulders, she lost the robe, reaching behind her to shove it to the floor. Never in her life had she been this confident naked, but then never in her life had Shane Markham told her that she turned him on like no one else could.

"Oh yeah," he groaned, reaching into his pocket to withdraw a row of six attached condoms. "Ride me while you're naked, and I'm fully dressed. That's hot."

She laughed as he tore into a foil wrapper and sheathed himself with flattering haste.

"You're awfully prepared."

He stilled, staring up at her with unmistakable intensity. "Because I was coming to see my girlfriend. She's stocked up, but I've found I'm wild for her. I don't want to miss any opportunity when she might be willing."

Bending at the waist, Abby kissed him, her heart melting as he kissed her back with reverent tenderness, his big hands cupping her spine and holding her close.

"I'll always be willing," she whispered, shivering as he reached between her legs and made her wet with desire. Then she gasped and moaned, relishing the feel of him slipping inside her.

“I‟m bewitched,” he said hoarsely, as she lifted and lowered with agonizing slowness, torturing them both. “Enchanted. Whatever. I‟m a goner. But it‟s not a damn spell. It‟s all you.”

“All me.”

“And you‟re all mine.”

“All yours.”

“And you can have all my nights.” His eyes shone with deep affection that she believed was absolutely real. “Use them as you will.”

She whimpered as he held her hips and pumped upward into her with a perfect stroke.

“Magic,” she breathed.

Shane nuzzled his face between her breasts. “You and me.”

Epilogue

Six months later…

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“WOW, LOOK AT THAT ROCK.”KAYLA WHISTLED.“ANOTHER„Most Eligible

Bachelor‟ bites the dust. Lucky girl.”

Abby smiled with contentment and admired her two-and-a-half-carat diamond engagement ring for the millionth time.

“Hey, Lucky Girl,” Sarah called out, laughing.

Turning to face one of her store managers, Abby tossed an arm around Kayla‟s shoulder, and whispered, “Thanks for the costume, by the way.”

“Told you,” Kayla gloated with a good-natured wink.

“You don‟t mind if I take some of this cake home with me, do you?” Sarah asked. “This cream cheese filling is divine.”

“Lord, please do,” Abby muttered, leaving Kayla‟s side to hunt down disposable containers. “I love you guys for this girls-only engagement party, but if that cake stays in this house, I won‟t fit into my grandmother‟s wedding gown.”

She set out a stack of plasticware. Everyone helped themselves, and Abby was relieved to see that only a paperback-sized piece of the massive cake remained.

Later, she stood on her porch and waved good-bye to the nearly two dozen girlfriends who‟d shown up unannounced a few hours before. As the last car drove away with a friendly beep of the horn, Shane stepped out of his house and joined her, setting his hand at the small of her back and escorting her back into the kitchen.

“You knew,” Abby said as she started to put the cake away.

“I knew,” Shane agreed, looking sinfully delicious in casual blue jeans and a white cotton T-shirt. He stuck his finger in the frosting.

“Hey!”

He smeared the creaminess in the cleavage displayed by her halter top.

“Shane!” She laughed, a joyful sound that turned into a moan as he caught her around the waist and began licking up his mess.

“Yummy,” he purred, collecting the container and lacing his fingers with hers.

Abby‟s eyes widened as he pulled her toward the bedroom. “What are you doing?”

He tossed her a heated glance over his shoulder. “I‟m going to smear this all over your ABC Amber LIT Converter

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body and lick you clean.”

She shivered in instant sexual awareness. “You‟re channeling the caveman again, aren‟t you?” she said breathlessly, carnal anticipation heating her blood.

“You betcha.”

“I love the caveman.”

“I love you.”

Abby smiled.Magic.

Sarah Manning stepped into her cozy apartment and blew the windblown strands of blond hair out of her face. She shut her front door with a bump of her hip.

“Hi, Petey,” she greeted, smiling as her calico cat purred in welcome and wrapped lovingly around her legs. “Why can‟t all men be like you, huh? Sweet, attentive, but hot, like Shane Markham.”

She laughed softly. She didn‟t carry a torch for Shane, but she was a red-blooded woman and knew a hunk when she saw one. “Hang on. Let me put this stuff down, and I‟ll pet you.”

Walking into her small galley kitchen, Sarah set her bags on the tile counter. She pulled out the plastic container filled with cake, and turned to put it in the fridge.

It was then that the paper stuck to the bottom caught her eye. Curious, Sarah pulled it free and opened the folds to read the contents.

“Stamina of four, huh?” She snorted. “I wish. Bring it on.” She tossed the note in her junk drawer and picked up the cake. She paused before the fridge, then said to hell with it and got a fork.

“In lieu of hot male with endless stamina, the cake will have to do.”

Petey flicked his tail dismissively. She laughed and followed him into the living room.

“Sad replacement, I agree.”

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A former government Financial Officer, Cathryn graduated from university with a Bachelor of Business degree, majoring in accounting and economics. She lives in Eastern Canada ABC Amber LIT Converter

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with her husband, two kids, and crazy chocolate Labrador Retriever. Shortly into her career Cathryn quickly figured out the corporate life wasn‟t for her. Needing an outlet for her creative energy, Cathryn turned in her briefcase and calculator and began writing erotic romance full time. Cathryn enjoys writing dark paranormals and humorous contemporaries.

When Cathryn isn‟t writing you can find her reading, relaxing with her family or watching a big action flick.

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